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June 19, 2012

Contact:
Meagan Racey, USFWS (413) 253-8558
Ed Coletta, MassDEP (617) 292-5737
Gail Mastrati, RIDEM (401) 222-4700,
ext. 2402

State and Federal Officials Release Draft Piping Plover Restoration Plan Associated with the Bouchard Barge 120 Oil Spill

Public Invited to Provide Comment & Attend Information Meeting on July 10

The Natural Resource Damages Trustee Council for the Bouchard Barge 120 oil spill today released a draft restoration plan and environmental assessment for state and federally threatened piping plovers impacted by the 2003 spill in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

It is the first of three anticipated plans to begin restoration of Buzzards Bay and nearby sites to compensate for natural resources injured and uses affected by the *Bouchard B-120* Oil Spill. The development and implementation of the restoration plans are being funded by a \$6 million natural resource damages settlement from Bouchard Transportation Co., Inc; \$715,000 of this total was awarded to restore piping plovers.

The draft plan describes the injuries resulting from the 98,000-gallon spill that oiled roughly 100 miles of shoreline, including beaches where piping plovers feed and nest. Five chicks and 12 adults were estimated to have been killed. The plan also evaluates various alternatives to restore piping plovers, including:

- Acquisition and protection of breeding habitat;
- Nest monitoring and management activities;
- Habitat enhancement; and
- Enhanced management activities.

The trustees propose implementing the last alternative, an enhanced management program at breeding sites in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. The program consists of a three-part

approach, including targeted predator management, increased enforcement of local beach ordinances on plover-nesting beaches, and outreach and education.

“We would like to allocate a portion of this important settlement to work with landowners to increase the success of nesting piping plovers,” said Tom Chapman, the New England Field Office supervisor for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. “These efforts will help the threatened plover population make up for the birds killed by the oil spill.”

The trustees will hear comments on the draft plan at a public information meeting on Tuesday, July 10 at 7 p.m. at Heritage Park on Davol Street in Fall River, Massachusetts.

“This is an important step in beginning restoration of injuries caused by the *Bouchard B-120* Oil Spill,” said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Rick Sullivan, who serves as Massachusetts’ trustee for natural resources. “Massachusetts supports breeding habitat for more than one third of the Atlantic Coast piping plover population, and we want to ensure viability of the species for the generations to come.”

To review the draft plan, visit <http://www.fws.gov/newengland>. Hardcopies of the report are also available at the Jonathan Bourne Public Library in Bourne, Mass., and the New Bedford Free Public Library in New Bedford, Mass.

Written comments will be accepted through August 1, 2012, by mail: US Fish & Wildlife Service, 70 Commercial Street, Suite 300, Concord, NH 03301 Attn: Molly Sperduto; or e-mail to molly_sperduto@fws.gov. For more information or to obtain a hard copy, please contact Molly Sperduto at (603) 223-2541.

For the current settlement, the Trustee Council is composed of representatives from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, representing the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs; Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management; United States Fish and Wildlife Service, representing the U.S. Department of Interior; and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, representing the U.S. Department of Commerce. The spill also affected tribal resources, and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head previously settled separately with Bouchard.